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FOR:  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
FEDERAL THEATER RADIO DIVISION  
1697 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK CITY

" GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER"

-by-

Hughes Allison

MUSIC

ANNOUNCER

THEME SWELLS - FADES

When an author writes a play, he often creates a great and dynamic character out of his own imagination. To give his principal support, he draws lesser characters from the same source. After technologists have built appropriate scenery from a designer's sketch, the playwright watches a director and a group of actors mold his story into drama.

Occasionally, an author selects a great and dynamic character from the pages of history. After enormous research, where-in he discovers other characters contemporary to his principal, he writes biography.

MUSICTHEME BRIEFLY UP & AGAIN UNDER

ANNOUNCER

Tonight, FATE has selected a character for us from the past and current history of America. And DESTINY has dramatised our principal's startling biography, placing him upon a WORLD-WIDE-STAGE....against a background of art, music, and science....where the WILL to serve and to teach humanity directs Dr. George Washington Carver in a story of courage, sacrifice, and genius.

MUSICMILITARY DRUMS "DIXIE" "JOHN BROWN'S BODY" (FADE)

ANNOUNCER

(FADING)

It was 1864. The United States was torn by violent civil strife. Brigands and desperadoes roamed the country....killing, kidnaping, robbing! The North and the South were both victims....

SOUND (FADE IN) GALLOPING HORSES. WHOOPING MEN. GUN SHOTS. (FADE)

BOSS

Alright! Stick 'em up Yankee! Now Steve....take everything you kin find on him.

STEVE

Look what he's got in his vest-pocket! A brand new watch.

BOSS

Grab it! And let's hit th' trail.

STEVE

Got it Boss. Where do we go from here?

BOSS

First....a bullet in this Yank's hide!

SOUNDA SHOT. THE GURGLE OF A DYING MAN. A SHOT.

STEVE

That finishes him.

BOSS

Now we'll visit his FRIENDS, the Rebs. The Carver plantation....for instance.

STEVE

What'll we git there, Boss?

BOSS

You'll see. Let's go!

SOUNDGALLOPING HORSES. WHOOPING MEN. (FADING FAST)

MUSIC"DIXIE" BRIEFLY UP & UNDER

ANNOUNCER

Night had fallen upon the village of Diamond Grove,  
Missouri and the surrounding farmland. The owner of

(FADING) the Carver plantation and his wife had retired. Abed,  
Mr. Carver was restless and unable to sleep....

(MUSIC SHOULD BE OUT AT THIS POINT)

(PAUSE)

MR. CARVER

(FADE IN)

....and I never did want slaves. (SIGHS) But what else  
was I to do?

MRS. CARVER

There've been few slave owners like you, Moses.

MR. CARVER

My land HAD to be worked. My crops planted and har-  
vested. Paid labor wasn't the fashion. So I was  
forced to play follow the leader....and BUY human  
beings!

MRS. CARVER

You've been kind to them.

MR. CARVER

I've tried to be. (SIGHS) Yet....my conscience bothers  
me.

MRS. CARVER

I think you exaggerate your position, Moses. It's no  
disgrace to be a slave owner. That's Northern propa-  
ganda.

MR. CARVER

My dear....the North's opinion is merely the echo of--

MRS. CARVER

Of what, Moses?

MR. CARVER

Of the deep, silent scorn of COMMON DECENCY! And' I  
know God....when the South stands before His judgement  
....will call it a disgrace. (SIGHS) But in a little  
while....it'll all be over.

MRS. CARVER

You mean the war, Moses? You think our ~~war~~ army will be defeated?

MR. CARVER           It HAS been defeated. Nothing but pride keeps the South's army in the field now. And already Lincoln has issued a Procla~~mation~~ Emancipation.

MRS. CARVER          They've heard about it down in the quarters.

MR. CARVER           Yes. I know. Just as soon as the Union Army conquers this territory....the black folk, you and I have called slaves, will be free.

MRS. CARVER          I wonder what will become of them? I wonder what they'll do with their freedom?

SOUND               OF RESTLESS MAN TOSSING ABOUT IN BED.

MR. CARVER           They'll need help. And those of us who know them best should help them most.

MRS. CARVER          By the way, Moses!

MR. CARVER           Yes?

MRS. CARVER          I didn't mean to interrupt you. But you spoke of help. Which reminded me of something.

MR. CARVER           Yes?

MRS. CARVER          Mary and her baby. I made my usual rounds of the Quarters today. She and the child are no better.

MR. CARVER           But I thought--

MRS. CARVER          (INTERRUPTING) I fear she has pneumonia.

MR. CARVER           Ah! That IS bad! How did she--

MRS. CARVER          (INTERRUPTING) It's this sudden change in the weather. And she WOULD get out of bed too soon!

MR. CARVER           Didn't you tell her that one of the other women would take care of her duties....here in the house?

MRS. CARVER          Yes. But you know Mary!

MR. CARVER           A strange woman!

MRS. CARVER          The strangest Negro I've ever seen. Have you ever

MRS. CARVER (Cont'd) noticed her eyes, Moses?

MR. CARVER Haven't I! Deep, black pools, seeing....so it seems  
....into the past as far back as Africa where her  
grandparents must have been royalty.

MRS. CARVER And gazing FAR into the future....as if--  
(SUDDENLY TENSE) Moses do you hear--

(PAUSE)

MR. CARVER What, dear?

MRS. CARVER Horses!

MR. CARVER Our own stock, I guess. They must be as restless as  
I am.

MRS. CARVER That must have been it. Still--  
Well no matter. And now dear!

MR. CARVER Yes?

MRS. CARVER We mustn't keep on talking like this in bed. You've  
got to get some rest.

MR. CARVER And tomorrow....I'll ride into town and see the doctor.  
Mary and her baby must have the proper care.

MRS. CARVER Thank you, Moses. I knew you'd say that. Now go  
to sleep.

MR. CARVER (SIGHS) Goodnight, dear.

(PAUSE)

MRS. CARVER There it is again Moses!


MR. CARVER (HALF ASLEEP)Hmnn. What? What did you say?

SOUND (AFAR OFF) GALLOPING HORSES. (SUSTAIN)

(PAUSE)

MRS. CARVER That cant be our stock! Moses are you asleep?

(PAUSE)

Poor man! He's so tired and worried. The war. 



MRS. CARVER (Cont'd) The farm. The slaves....something's always wrong with them.

(PAUSE)

SOUND (CLOSER) GALLOPING HORSES. (SUSTAIN)

MRS. CARVER (CALLING) Moses! Moses! Wake up! Wake up Moses!

MR. CARVER (WAKING UP) Yes? Yes, dear?

MRS. CARVER The Night Riders! They're--

MR. CARVER (SUDDENLY WIDE AWAKE) We're being attacked! My robe! Where's my robe?!

SOUND STAMPING HORSES. EXCITED CRIES COMING FROM THE SLAVE QUARTERS. WHOOPING MEN. (SUSTAIN)

MRS. CARVER Here's your robe! But dont go rushing out--

SOUND MAN HURRIEDLY LEAVING ROOM. DOOR OPENING AND SLAMMING.

MRS. CARVER (FADING) Moses! I'm coming with you!

MUSIC MUSICAL BRIDGE

SOUND GALLOPING HORSES. WHOOPING MEN. GUN SHOTS (FADING FAST)

SOUND (FADE IN) MAN RUNNING TOWARD SLAVE QUARTERS. (SUSTAIN)

MRS. CARVER (CALLING AWAY) Moses! Wait for me. Dont go near the Quarters!

SIMS (CLOSE) Mr. Carver! Mr. Carver!

SOUND MAN RUNNING (CUT SUDDENLY)

MR. CARVER (OUT OF BREATH) That you, Sims?

SIMS Yes, sir.

MRS CARVER (COMING UP FAST) What's happened?!

SIMS The Night Riders. They've gone now, Ma'am.

MR. CARVER But why a maid on the Slave Quarters, Sims?

SIMS. They took Mary and her baby, sir?

MRS. CARVER Oh, my God!

MR. CARVER But....why....what use have they for a slave and her child?!

MRS. CARVER Mary's ill! She'll not be able to stand....

SIMS I tried to stop them ma'am. But the whole thing happened so quickly! And every last one of them....there must have been twenty....was armed to the teeth.

MR. CARVER Those shots I heard! Was anyone....

SIMS All the shooting was in the air. Just to scare us.

MRS. CARVER Moses! Sims!....you've got to find Mary and her child. We cant have them exposed to this weather....and God knows to what else.

SIMS When I rushed down to the Slave Quarters, I heard one of the robbers say, "there's Sims, Carver's Overseer!" Then another tossed me this.

MR. CARVER What.....a note?

SIMS Yes,sir.

SOUND OF CRUMPLED PAPER CHANGING HANDS.

(PAUSE)

SIMS I'll strike a match sir.

SOUND OF MATCH BEING STRUCK.

(PAUSE)

MR. CARVER Now let's see....

(PAUSE)

MRS. CARVER (READING) "Come to the valley and bring...."

MR. CARVER It says for you to go, Sims!

SIMS Gladly, Mr. Carver.

MR. CARVER And do just as the note tells you. I'm will to make any sacrifice for....

SIMS Yes sir! I understand!

MRS. CARVER And Sims! Bring them back safe!

MUSIC MUSICAL BRIDGE

SOUND OF HEAVY RAINFALL. UP BRIEFLY & UNDER. (SUSTAIN)

BOSS (FADE IN)

....throw some more wood on the fire, Steve.

STEVE Sure, Boss.

SOUND OF WOOD BEING THROWN ON FIRE.

BOSS Gosh! These trees dont give us much shelter from this rain.

STEVE Fire feels good though, dont it?

BOSS Yeah.

SOUND OF SICK WOMAN COUGHING. (REPEAT THROUGHOUT SCENE)

STEVE The old hag's sure got a chestful of cold, aint she?

BOSS Yeah.

(PAUSE)

STEVE Say, Boss!

BOSS Well?

STEVE I aint been able to quite figure this all out yet.

BOSS It's simple....stupid!

STEVE But what use is this sick black woman and her kid to us?

BOSS (EXASPERATED) Look!....didn't I tell you that old man Carver and his wife was soft hearted?!

STEVE Yeah. But....

BOSS (INTERRUPTING) Well when people have soft hearts.... you kin pretty nearly always git what you want from 'em....if you know how to handle 'em.

STEVE Well....why couldn't we just hold him up and take his money and this horse you was telling me about?



BOSS Listen! Because this war was made to ~~order~~ for tramps like you and me....it dont mean that all the booty comes as easy as picking berries! You got to use some brains....see?

STEVE And you got the brains, Boss!

BOSS Shut up, and listen! (PAUSE) The Rebs have took to burrying their money. So have the Yanks....in the territory we work. And horse stealing is bad for the neck all over. (LAUGHS) Funny thing about stealing a man's horse or his wife. His worse enemy will knock off....and help him catch and hang you.

STEVE That sure is true!

BOSS So you got to be smart. Now take Carver. He's sentimental. Treats his slaves with the utmost kindness. Feels responsible for 'em....and all that. Just like they was all children. And his wife's the same way.

STEVE How you happen to know so much about Carver, Boss?

BOSS I used to be a Slave Trader. Found it good business to know the habits and customs of my clients. (SIGHS) That was a good thing....while it lasted.

STEVE Yeah! Lincoln killed a ~~swell~~<sup>swell</sup> business, didn't he?

BOSS As I was saying, old man Carver is soft. While ~~npbody~~<sup>nobody</sup> else might do it....or help him do it....he'd go the limit to get back one or two of his Negroes....if they was kidnaped. See?

STEVE Yeah!

BOSS And this sick woman with a baby! I bet his heart is bleeding. (LAUGHS) So we steal his blacks, write him a note, telling him to bring us all the money he kin

BOSS (Cont'd) dig up, and that fast race horse....along with the deed to....

STEVE (INTERRUPTING) Then we own the horse LEGALLY, huh Boss? If we got the deed to it?

BOSS Now you're showing some sense! Yeah, we lawfully own the horse. And don't have to go running away from here so fast.

STEVE You think his Overseer will come with the....

BOSS (INTERRUPTING) ~~Listen!~~ Listen! Hear that?

SOUND (FADE IN) HORSE'S HOOF BEATS ON WET EARTH. (SUSTAIN)

(PAUSE)

STEVE Yeah! It's a horse.

BOSS (SOFTLY AND ASIDE) Git your rifle and cover him!

SIMS (CALLING AWAY FROM MIKE) Hello there! Hello there!

MARY (WEAKLY) Mistah Sims! Mistah Sims!

BOSS (ASIDE TO MARY) Shut up, you! (SHOUTING TO SIMS) Ride on up to the fire! But don't try nothing....see?

SOUND HOOF BEATS UP. HORSE COMING TO STAND-STILL.

(PAUSE)

BOSS Now, you kin git off. (ASIDE TO STEVE) Nice piece of horse-flesh....er, Steve?

STEVE Yeah. Looks like all you said it was, Boss.

BOSS Fastest thing in this part of the country!

SOUND MAN DISMOUNTING FROM HORSE

BOSS Bring the money, Sims?

SOUND OF BAG OF COINS BEING THROWN ON GROUND.

BOSS Pick up the sack, Steve! (PAUSE) Now take the bridle and lead the nag over here.

SOUND OF HORSE WALKING SLOWLY. (CUT ABRUPTLY)

MARY (CALLING WEAKLY) Mistah Sims! Mistah Sims!

SIMS Yes, Mary.

MARY Ah'm sho glad yuh cum.

SIMS You didn't think mister Carver would leave you and the baby with a bunch of thieves....did you?

MARY An' now he done had tuh give up all dat money....an' dat good horse....fur me and dis chile!

SIMS You're a good woman, Mary.

MUSIC "SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT" IN BACKGROUND

MARY All mah life....Ah've tried tuh be good. But trouble....

SIMS (INTERRUPTING) Your troubles will soon be over, Mary. I've come to take you home.

MARY Ah'm goin' home, Mistah Sims. An' Ah knows mah troubles cant bother me dere. But it wont be back at th' Carver place.

SIMS Mary....Mary you're going to be alright!

MARY (CHOCALLING WEAKLY) Mistah Sims! In mah time...Ah've been under lots uv overseers. An' Ah been owned by lots uv white folks. But mens like yuh and Mistah Carver wuzn't meant to own and oversee slaves. Yoll aint hard nuff!

SIMS It looks like the North will win the war, Mary. In a little while you....and all the rest of your people will be free!

MARY Ah'm free now, Mistah Sims. (PAUSE) Yuh knows Ah aint got but a few mo' minutes fur dis world. (PAUSE) Ah baby goin' tuh see dat freedom thow h. The kind yuh's

MARY (Cont'd) talkin' about.

SIMS What's his name, Mary?

MARY Th' baby? Ah aint named him yit. 'Spect Ah bettuh.... do dat right now. (PAUSE) Who th' biggest man you evah hyeah tell uv, Mistah Sims?

(PAUSE)

SIMS George Washington, I guess.

MARY Den....Ah'll call him dat.

SIMS And his last name? What's yours, Mary?

MARY Ah been Mary all Mah life. An' th' baby's pappy went by John. 'Fore Mistah Carver bought me....mah ~~hus~~ las' owner sold mah husband down th' river. Ah reckon he's dead by now.

SIMS The baby ought to have a last name, Mary.

MARY Yuh named th' best man yuh knows. An' th' best one Ah knows....is Mistah Carver. Let dat be his las' name.

SIMS George Washington Carver. You name him that? (PAUSE)

MARY Mary!

MARY (VERY WEAK) Take him out uv dis rain, Mistah Sims! He's done got sick fum it.

BOSS It's a puny looking brat, Sims. And you got a long walk back to the Carver place. So save yourself some trouble and leave the kid here. It wont live long anyhow. What good is another black brat to the world?

MARY (SUDDENLY STRONG) He'll live! God didn't mean for him to suffer such misery....ef He wuzn't goin' tuh lift him up! Maybe as high up as th' stars! (GASPS FOR BREATH AND COLLAPSES)

(PAUSE)

STEVE                   Boss!

BOSS                   Yeah! I know! She's dead.

SIMS                   (SIGHS) We've got a long walk ahead of us, baby.

SOUND                   OF MAN PICKING UP WHIMPERING INFANT.

SIMS                   So come on....George Washington Carver!

SOUND                   OF MAN WALKING AWAY IN RAIN. (FADE)

MUSIC                   MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND                   NOISY BOYS ON COLLEGE CAMPUS. AN "ALMA MATER" IN  
BACKGROUND. UP BRIEFLY & UNDER.

1ST. BOY               (POMPOUSLY) Well, Gentlemen! Here we are, already  
to welcome those other GENTLEMEN....who are to take  
our places of a year ago!

2OND. BOY              (IMMITATING A CIRCUS BARKER) None other than the most  
quaint, the most peculiar, the most stupid FREAKS!....  
ever gathered together in one place! This year's  
FRESHMEN!

SOUND                   BURST OF LAUGHTER FROM MANY BOYS. (CUT ABRUPTLY)

1ST. BOY               And Gentlemen of the Sophomore Class! By WELCOME I  
mean....

2OND. BOY              (INTERRUPTING LOUDLY) A ducking in the pond, both shoes  
filled with axle-grease, and a coat of red paint!

3RD. BOY               You tell 'em, feller!

SOUND                   BURST OF LAUGHTER. (SUSTAIN BRIEFLY)

1ST BOY               (MOCK EXASPERATION & ABOVE LAUGHTER) Gentlemen!  
Gentlemen! You wouldn't do that to FRESHMEN!

2OND BOY               Look! Look!

1ST BOY               Ah! What have we here?

3RD. BOY               Did you ever see such a sight?!



1ST BOY                   Overalls, no less. And, if mine eyes DONT deceive me,  
SOMETHING out of the wood-pile!

2OND BOY                 What! No shoes?

3RD. BOY                 Wonder can it talk?

GEORGE                   Please! Could you direct me to the place where Freshmen  
register?

3RD. BOY                 Ah! It DOES talk!

2OND. BOY                A prize freak, fellers! This one's BLACK!

SOUND                   A ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

TOM                      (ABOVE LAUGHTER) Wait a minute fellers! (PAUSE) Aw!  
hold it for a second! (PAUSE) New fellers! Fun IS  
fun! But dont be cruel! (SHOUTING TO GEORGE) You  
come with me what-ever your name is!

GEORGE                   My name's George Washington Carver.

SOUND                   LAUGHTER        (FADE)

SOUND                   (FADE IN) FOOT-STEPS OF TWO BOYS IN CORRIDOR. (SUSTAIN)

TOM                      What did you say your name was?

GEORGE                   George Washington Carver.

TOM                      Mine's Tom Dodson. (PAUSE)

1ST BOY                   Overalls, no less. And, if mine eyes DONT deceive me,  
 SOMETHING out of the wood-pile!

2OND BOY                 What! No shoes?

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